

Why Divide

A perennial border packed with interesting leaf textures and colorful, fragrant blossoms is truly a treat for the senses. Unfortunately, overcrowded plants must struggle to compete for nutrients and water while restricted air circulation creates conditions favorable to many foliar diseases. Perennial plants vary widely in their growth habits and rate of growth. Some grow slowly and take a long time to become established while others grow so quickly that they soon threaten to take over the garden! Division is a useful technique to help keep your perennial border neat, healthy and in peak bloom.

Perennials will send signals to let you know that they would like to be divided. The signals to watch out for include: flowering is reduced with the flowers getting smaller; the growth in the center of the plant dies out leaving a hole with all the growth around the edges; plant loses vigor; plant starts to flop or open up needing staking; or it just may have outgrown its bounds. These are the signs to look for and not a date on the calendar. See table on page 2 for recommended division times.

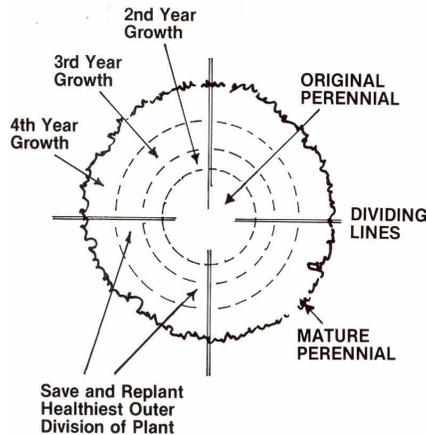
How to Divide

There are two basic methods of dividing perennials. One is to cut them apart, the other is to pull or tease them apart. You will be able to determine which method to use by examining the type of root system and growth pattern of the plants you are dividing. Start by digging up the entire clump.



Tough, dense roots like those of peony will need to be cut apart with a sharp knife or spade. Tangled, fibrous roots or clumps with small plantlets growing at the edges of a large clump can be separated by hand or by inserting two garden forks placed back-to-back then pulling them apart.

Once the plant is removed, divide the plant into portions the size of the original planting. Perennials should be planted at the same soil level at which they were removed.



Dividing Perennials

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Division Guidelines

Many perennials tend to die out from the center if not divided on a regular basis. The roots in the center of the clump become so densely overcrowded that they can't take up enough nutrients and water from the reduced amount of available soil. Plants that have died-out in the center, as well as plants that have fewer or smaller flowers than in previous seasons, need to be divided. This rejuvenates aging plants and may extend their life span in the garden.

DIVIDE IN EARLY SPRING: Every 1-3 years	
Aster Beardtongue (<i>Penstemon</i>) Beebalm (<i>Monarda</i>) Carnation (<i>Dianthus</i>) Common Sundrops (<i>Oenothera fruticosa</i>) Coralbells (<i>Heuchera</i>) Cornflower (<i>Centaurea</i>) Delphinium Fernleaf Bleeding Heart (<i>Dicentra eximia</i>)	Foamflower (<i>Tiarella</i>) Garden Mums (<i>Dendranthema x grandiflora</i>) Obedient Plant (<i>Physostegia</i>) Painted Daisy (<i>Tanacetum</i>) Shasta Daisy (<i>Leucanthemum</i>) Spiderwort (<i>Tradescantia</i>) Tall Phlox (<i>Phlox paniculata</i>) Tickseed (<i>Coreopsis</i>) Yarrow (<i>Achillea</i>)
DIVIDE IN EARLY SPRING: Every 3-5 years	
Astilbe Bellflower (<i>Campanula</i>) Blanket Flower (<i>Gaillardia</i>) Catmint (<i>Nepeta</i>) Coneflower (<i>Rudbeckia</i>) Daylily (<i>Hemerocallis</i>) Gay Feather (<i>Liatris</i>)	Gooseneck Loosestrife (<i>Lysimachia clethroides</i>) Jacob's Ladder (<i>Polemonium</i>) Mallow (<i>Malvia</i>) Sea Thrift (<i>Armeria</i>) Speedwell (<i>Veronica</i>) Yellow Loosestrife (<i>Lysimachia punctata</i>)
DIVIDE IN EARLY SPRING: Infrequently, 5-10 years	
Cranesbill (<i>Geranium</i>) Goatsbeard (<i>Aruncus</i>) Hosta Japanese Anemone (<i>Anemone x hybrida</i>) Lady's Mantle (<i>Alchemilla</i>)	Lungwort (<i>Pulmonaria</i>) Meadow Rue (<i>Thalictrum</i>) Meadowsweet (<i>Filipendula</i>) Oxeye (<i>Heliopsis</i>) Siberian Iris
DIVIDE IN LATE SUMMER OR EARLY FALL	
Asiatic Lily Bearded Iris *Daylily (<i>Hemerocallis</i>) *Jacob's Ladder (<i>Polemonium</i>)	*Peony (divide infrequently) *Tall Phlox (<i>Phlox paniculata</i>) *Siberian Iris *Can also be divided in early spring.
DO NOT DIVIDE	
Baby's Breath (<i>Gypsophila</i>) Balloon Flower (<i>Platycodon</i>) Bugbane (<i>Cimicifuga</i>) Butterfly Weed (<i>Asclepias</i>) Clematis Evening Primrose (<i>Oenothera missouriensis</i>)	False Indigo (<i>Baptisia</i>) Flax (<i>Linum</i>) Gentian Lupine Monkshood (<i>Aconitum</i>) Russian Sage (<i>Perovskia</i>)
DIVIDE ONLY TO PROPAGATE	
Bugbane (<i>Cimicifuga</i>) Globeflower (<i>Trollius</i>)	Yucca

The frequency recommendations listed are intended as general guidelines for maintaining the health and vigor of perennials under average growing conditions. Gardens that are watered, weeded and fertilized on a regular basis may have plants that need to be divided more frequently to keep them contained within their allotted space.

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